

HOW TO HELP YOUR PASTOR.

THEODORE L. CUVLER, D. D.

The relation of a pastor and a parishioner is much like that of wedlock—a relation of mutual obligation, and it ought to be one of mutual affection and helpfulness. If at the time of his installation he made a vow to be faithful to you, the member of his flock, you also have made an equally binding promise to be true to him. Has he not a clear right to your assistance, and just as strong a claim on your support as you can have on him for pulpit instruction and pastoral oversight? Granting that you ought to help your pastor, how can you do it?

There are many ways in which you can strengthen his hands and cheer his heart. First of all, practice the Golden Rule toward him: do as you would be done by; put yourself in his place. He cannot always strike twelve in his sermons any more than you can always make a shrewd investment, or always finish a piece of work quite up to your promise. You don't like to be unreasonably censured; neither does he; and when you are scolding a good pastor you are discrediting a servant of the Lord and obstructing his work. Supposing him to be conscientious and doing his best, he has a right to your generous appreciation. If you have just ground for criticisms, take them to his study, and not to your neighbors' houses. You may really help him by the first method, provided that you go in a frank, fraternal spirit. A sensible minister will welcome a sensible criticism.

2. For a more pleasant purpose than for criticisms you may freely visit him, or ask him to your own house; and that is to devise plans for doing good. Partners in business consult together often; you are a spiritual partner with your minister. It is your church as much as it is his; it really belongs to him who owns you both. Just as clearly is it your duty to labor for the Master as it is your pastor's duty. Put your heads and hearts together, and devise plans of usefulness and the best methods to make them successful. If he sets on foot a feasible plan for quickening church life, aiding the Sabbath-school or the Society of Christian Endeavor, increasing the prayer-meeting or reaching the unconverted, then back him up heartily.

3. A minister who is worthy of the name can stand an empty purse better than empty pew or an empty prayer-meeting. It is a disgrace to a church, that failure to pay an honest salary should straiten a pastor's purse; but the spiritual emptiness afflicts his heart the most keenly. Perhaps your pastor is wondering

what has become of you on the evenings of the devotional meetings. The better man and woman you are, the more you are missed; the worse you are, the more you need to go. It may be that your pastor is disheartened by the emptiness of your pew on the Sabbath. He has carefully prepared a discourse for your benefit. You have lost it. Both he and you suffer from that absence. For one, I am ready to confess that I never made any converts to the truth in an empty pew, and never have delivered a sermon loud enough to awaken a parishioner who was dozing at home or strolled off to some other church. If a good reason keeps you at home, try to send a substitute; invite some friend who seldom hears the Gospel to go and occupy your seat. Your minister gets a hearer, and the hearer may get what will save his soul. Church members sometimes complain that their minister does not "draw" a larger congregation; yet they do nothing to draw outsiders to the house of God by a cordial invitation to come. Help your pastor to fill the house.

4. Follow up the invitations, appeals, and counsels of the pulpit with your own efforts for the conversion of sinners. The pastor is trying to draw souls to Jesus; pray don't draw the other way. If one of our family or one of your Sabbath school class comes home from the sanctuary thoughtful and tender, then aim to deepen that impression. Draw with your minister; follow up his efforts with your own. But the downward pull of your trifling talk, or your unkind criticisms, or your inconsistent conducts may be an overmatch for the upward lift of his faithful discourse. Cooperate with Christ's ambassador in the grandest work that man or angel can covet—the work of saving immortal souls. Who doubts that if all our Church members preached Christ as faithfully in practice and in personal efforts as our average ministers preach him in the pulpit, the spiritual droughts would give place to glorious harvests? "As ye go, preach," is a commission to the pew as well as to the pulpit.

6. A single sagacious and active helper is a rich blessing to a pastor. But several scores of them are still better. If he leans all the time on Aaron and Hur, then the rest of the flock are apt to grow lazy themselves, and censorious toward the two men who occupy the leading position; and what shall the minister do when Aaron is sick and Hur is absent from home? That is not a healthy church in which all the work, all the giving, and all the praying is done by a few individuals, even if the men are Calebs and the women

are Tabithas. It is the pull of the whole church that brings the large blessing.

This touches the very core of the question, "How shall I help my pastor?" Pray for him, and practice as you pray. Peter's powerful discourse at the Pentecost was preceded by a powerful prayer gathering. Saturday evening wrestlings with God in a certain church brought heart-moving sermons on the next morning, until a revival shook the whole congregation. What your minister wants is spiritual power. That is God's gift; help him to plead for it. The mightiest minister who ever trod this earth since Christ's ascension was not ashamed to say, "Brethren, pray for us."—*New York Evangelist*.

HONEST WITH HIMSELF.

Little Frankie was forbidden to touch the sewing machine, and as he was generally a pretty obedient boy, his mother, auntie, and his auntie's friend were much surprised one afternoon to find the thread badly tangled and the needle broken. Frankie was, without doubt, the culprit, and he was called before the family tribunal of justice.

"Frankie, did you touch the sewing machine?" asked mamma, severely.

"Yes, mamma," was the tremulous answer. He was such a mite, so frail and delicate, so utterly helpless as he stood before us all with parted lips, and big, frightened eyes, our hearts went out to him in pity. "Now, Frankie," continued his mother, "you know I said I would punish you if you disobeyed me; and I shall have to keep my promise."

"Yes, mamma," came in a trembling whisper. Surely the little fellow was punished sufficiently; and yet we realized that justice must be enforced. "It is a very long time since you forbade him to touch the machine—perhaps he forgot," suggested his aunt.

"And if he forgot, that would make a difference, would it not?" I ventured to suggest.

"Certainly," answered his mother, "did you forget, Frankie? I know my boy will speak the truth."

There was a pause, and in that pause there was a struggle between right and wrong; then came the answer with a passionate cry as though the struggle were almost beyond his puny strength, "O mamma, mamma, I did remember. I shan't make believe to myself!"

Brave boy! How often we children of a larger growth lack the courage of being honest with ourselves.—*New York Observer*.